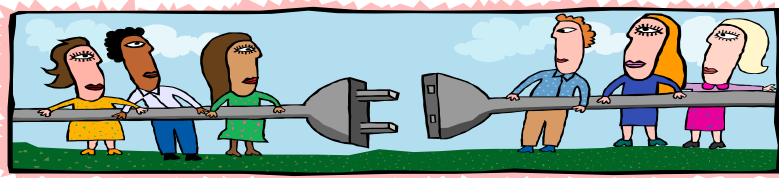


# Consumer Connection



*Informed Consumers, Quality Utility Services, and a Dedicated Organization for Missourians in the 21st Century*

Issue 8 - October 2003

A quarterly publication of the Missouri Public Service Commission  
Public Information & Education Department

## NATURAL GAS FAST FACTS

Wholesale natural gas prices this summer were near record highs for that time of year. The market price for natural gas was around \$3 per Mcf (1,000 cubic feet of gas) last summer. This summer, that price was between \$4 and \$6 per Mcf. This means that natural gas placed into storage this summer has been at a price higher than last summer, which will have an impact on customer rates this winter. Storage inventories and the severity of fall weather will be major factors in determining what natural gas prices will be this winter.

Weather is a key factor in what the price will be since it directly impacts demand for natural gas. If we have a cold winter, that will have an impact on prices. When natural gas prices spiked above \$10 per Mcf in January 2001, Missouri had just experienced the coldest November and December (2000) on record.

The wholesale market for natural gas is not regulated by the Missouri Public Service Commission nor any federal government agency (called deregulation). Congress deregulated wholesale natural gas rates more than a decade ago. Today those prices are determined in an open, competition-based market.

Your per unit cost for natural gas can be adjusted (either up or down) to reflect wholesale supplier changes up to four times a year.

It is very important that you contact your utility company if you are faced with a bill that you cannot pay. After you contact the utility company stating an inability to pay the bill in full, you should apply for energy assistance and enter into a payment agreement with the gas company.

A voluntary program called Budget Billing is offered by various utility companies. It allows customers to spread annual gas costs over a 12-month period. Budget billing amounts may be adjusted at various times during the 12-month period. This program is designed to help the customer avoid price spikes during the winter months.



The Public Service Commission does not regulate the wholesale price of natural gas, the price your local natural gas company pays to its suppliers for the gas they deliver

to you. The PSC does however review the purchasing decisions of the regulated natural gas utilities in Missouri. If imprudence is discovered in the natural gas utilities' purchasing efforts, refunds to customers are sought. The PSC also works to notify the public and businesses in Missouri of impending problems.

Since 1977, the Missouri Public Service Commission has required heat-related utility service providers under PSC jurisdiction to abide by the Commission's Cold Weather Rule. The Cold Weather Rule is designed to help customers maintain heat-related service during the winter. The rule mandates certain notice requirements and prohibits the disconnection of heat-related service when the temperature is forecasted to drop below 30 degrees.

**The Public Service Commission recently completed a series of town hall meetings across the state to help educate consumers on the potential for higher natural gas prices this winter. The Commission wishes to thank those who attended.**

## Manufactured Housing: Consumer Information Manuals and Inspections

The PSC is responsible for the regulation of all new Manufactured Homes (Mobile Homes) and Modular Units. Modular units include residential homes, commercial buildings and units used for educational purposes. The Commission ensures the homes or units are built to the applicable building codes and safety standards. **Consumers need to make sure they receive a copy of the Consumer Information Manual provided by the manufacturer.** This manual specifically outlines site preparation and how a home or unit is to be set-up, anchored or tied down. Installation and set-up is very important to ensure the long term value of the home or unit. **If requested, the PSC staff will conduct a field inspection to ensure compliance with all building and safety standards.** There is no charge for the inspection.

For more information regarding manufactured homes or modular units or how to file a request for an inspection, call 1-800-819-3180 or check our web site at [www.psc.mo.gov](http://www.psc.mo.gov) and click on the home icon.





## **Missouri-American Water Company rate case**

Customers are invited to comment on water and sewer rate requests filed by the Missouri-American Water Company. The PSC Staff will conduct a 30-minute general information session at the start of the hearing. The local public hearing schedule is:

### **October 15 - Riverside**

Information Session Noon -- Hearing begins at 12:30 pm  
City Council Chamber - 3000 NW Vivion Road

### **October 15 - St. Joseph**

Information Session 5:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 5:30 pm  
City Council Chamber - 1100 Frederick Avenue

### **October 22 - Jefferson City**

Information Session 5:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 5:30 pm  
PSC Offices, Rm. 310 - Governor Office Bldg., 200 Madison St.

### **October 29 - Warrensburg**

Information Session 5:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 5:30 pm  
City Council Chamber - 102 South Holden Street

### **November 5 - Brunswick**

Information Session Noon -- Hearing begins at 12:30 pm  
City Council Chamber - 115 West Broadway

### **November 5 - Mexico**

Information Session 5:30 pm - Hearing begins at 6:00 pm  
City Council Chamber - 300 North Coal Street

### **November 12 - Joplin**

Information Session 5:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 5:30 pm  
City Council Chamber - 303 East Third Street

### **December 3 - St. Charles**

Information Session Noon -- Hearing begins at 12:30 pm  
County Council Chamber - 100 North Third Street

### **December 3 - Chesterfield**

Information Session 5:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 5:30 pm  
City Council Chamber  
690 Chesterfield Parkway West

Thanks for visiting our booth at the Missouri State Fair -- we enjoyed seeing you and appreciate the interest you show in what we do. We handed out a great deal of educational materials. If you weren't able to attend but want some of those materials, please call us at 1-800-392-4211.

## **AmerenUE natural gas rate case**

Customers are invited to comment on a natural gas rate request filed by AmerenUE. The PSC Staff will conduct a 30-minute general information session at the start of the hearing. The local public hearing schedule is:

### **October 28 - Wentzville**

Information Session 6:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 6:30 pm  
Municipal Courtroom - 1019 Schroeder Creek Road

### **October 29 - Mexico**

Information Session 6:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 6:30 pm  
Chamber of Commerce Bldg. - 100 W. Jackson

### **October 30 - Columbia**

Information Session 6:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 6:30 pm  
Boone County Govt. Center - County Commission Chambers  
801 East Walnut

### **November 3 - Jefferson City**

Information Session 6:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 6:30 pm  
PSC Hearing Room 310 - Governor Office Building  
200 Madison Street

### **November 4 - Cape Girardeau**

Information Session 6:00 pm -- Hearing begins at 6:30 pm  
Show Me Center - 1333 N. Spriggs

Local public hearings give customers of the company an opportunity to comment on the rate proposal currently before the Public Service Commission. In addition, customers can bring any service related problems to the attention of the Commission.

## **PowerTown®**

It's important to know how to be safe around electricity.



PowerTOWN® is a valuable tool the PSC uses to educate children on how to be safe around electricity. Presentations can be scheduled by calling

Gregg Ochoa at 573-522-2760.

For printed materials regarding a number of consumer issues or copies of this newsletter, please call 573-751-7491 or email [joyceneuner@psc.state.mo.us](mailto:joyceneuner@psc.state.mo.us)



### **Who to Contact:**

Missouri Public Service Commission  
Consumer Hotline **1-800-392-4211**  
or email: [pscinfo@psc.state.mo.us](mailto:pscinfo@psc.state.mo.us)  
visit our website: [www.psc.mo.gov](http://www.psc.mo.gov)

### **Mail your inquiry or complaint to:**

Missouri Public Service Commission  
Consumer Services Department  
P.O. Box 360  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0360